

Testimony of
Ralph Hoyst
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*Regarding the Human Services Provisions
of Governor Malloy's Budget Proposal*
Appropriations Committee

February 27, 2015

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Human Services provisions of Governor Malloy's budget proposal.

My name is Ralph Hoyst and I am both a patient and a board member at First Choice Health Center. First Choice is a federally-qualified health center (FQHC) with sites in East Hartford, Manchester and Vernon. I am one of about 16,000 people who receive medical, behavioral health and/or dental care at First Choice.

The governor's budget proposal could be detrimental to First Choice's ability to continue to provide comprehensive, high quality health care services.

First, I ask the Committee to carefully consider the details behind the proposed reallocation of FQHC funds from the Department of Public Health to the Department of Social Services. While the move itself results in the same size pot of money to be distributed, each individual FQHC must be assured that it will not receive less money under the new distribution methodology than it currently does. The funding currently received helps First Choice and other FQHCs to continue to provide care to people who are uninsured or underinsured. More than 20% of First Choice patients are uninsured. Uninsured patients are never turned away, and they pay for health care on a sliding fee schedule. FQHCs rely on the state funds (as well as federal funds) to ensure that they can continue to provide services.

I am also concerned with the proposal to lower the income eligibility for HUSKY, for pregnant women and parents. The individuals who will be impacted by this change can purchase health insurance through Access Health CT, but the coverage will not be as comprehensive as they currently receive. With monthly premiums, annual deductibles, copayments and gaps in coverage (most notably, no dental coverage), these individuals will not be able to access the full range of health services that they will need. This is particularly troubling for pregnant women, as two lives are dependent upon receiving consistent, high-quality, uninterrupted prenatal care.

Thank you.